

Harry Pollitt

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FOR THIS AT LEAST WE KNOW,
THAT THE DAWN AND THE DAY IS COMING
AND FORTH THE BANNERS GO.

William Morris.

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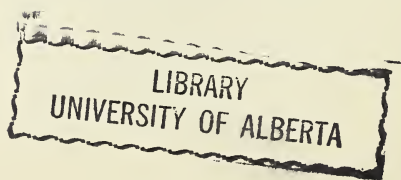
HARRY POLLITT

A TRIBUTE

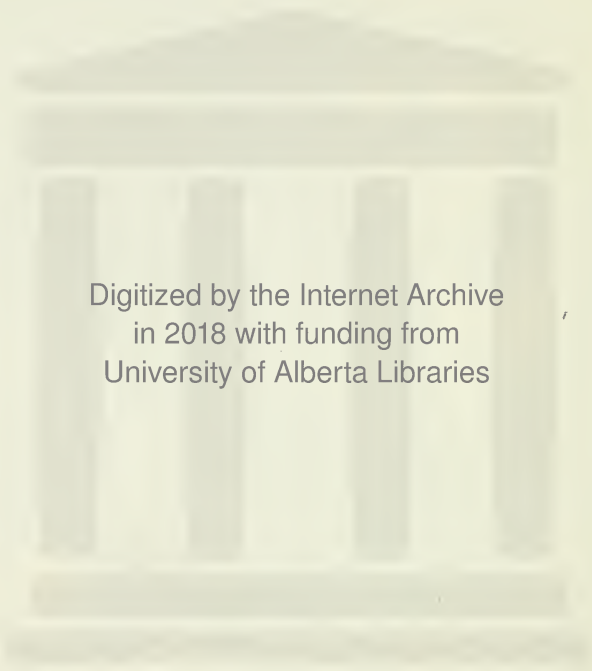
JULY 1960

One Shilling

*Issued by the Executive Committee
of the Communist Party of Great Britain*







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SPEECHES AT THE FUNERAL OF HARRY POLLITT JULY 9th, 1960

John Gollan, *General Secretary, Communist Party of Great Britain.*

WE have gathered here for a painful, yet proud duty—to take our last farewell of our dear friend and comrade, Harry Pollitt. Our Party has lost its main creator and the British working class one of the greatest leaders it has ever produced.

To Marjorie, Jean and Brian, and his sister Ella, those closest and dear to him, we extend our deepest sympathy at this sad hour. They know that all of us share this sense of great personal loss.

It is difficult to realise we won't see Harry again; that we won't have the inspiration of his speeches and personal leadership, the calm confidence of his counsel, the priceless value of his friendship and the cheerfulness of his irrepressible humour.

He was flesh and blood of the British working class. Its magnificent fighting qualities of courage, tenacity and class solidarity were his. His whole life is an imperishable record of service to his class.

We shall never forget his sacrifices to build trade unionism, raise wages and shorten hours; to assist the unemployed; to aid Republican Spain; to defeat Hitler fascism, and above all rid the world of the nuclear nightmare and banish war for ever.

Although no better fighter for the immediate needs of the British people ever lived, he saw as his main task that of convincing the working class to raise their sights towards conquering political power and creating socialism, so that the working people could take Britain's destiny into their own hands.

That is why he was with the first to welcome the Russian Revolution and realise that it opened a new page in world history. As he said, "The thing that mattered was that lads like me had whacked the bosses and landlords, had taken their factories, their land and their banks." And at a critical moment of the revolution, he rallied the London dockers and stopped the *Jolly George*, dealing a death-blow to armed intervention.

Living in the centre of the world's greatest empire, he was the outstanding champion of the oppressed colonial peoples. There is not a colonial country now enjoying national freedom which does not owe much to his efforts.

He was a leader of outstanding ability. Hating the squalor and suffering of capitalism, he had faith in the historic mission of the working class to win socialism, a faith arising out of pride in the common people and his scientific outlook. Marxism-Leninism, which he did so much to develop in Britain, was the basis of his whole life, moulding his character, the foundation of that devotion to principle which was his hallmark.

He had courage, the courage to face any situation, combining boldness in grasping opportunities with a capacity to remain as solid as a rock at times of adversity and setback. He never wavered.

He had the incomparable quality of inspiring others with his aims. There was none of us who did not feel ten feet taller after hearing him speak, when he showed us the gleam, the city beautiful and the smiling countryside of the Socialist Britain of the future. He made his last great speeches on his outstanding Australian tour.

His oratory was born of utter sincerity, burning conviction and rare humanity. Bitter about capitalism and oppression, he was not a bitter man, but a warm, human and lovable comrade for whom no task was too mean or service too small.

He knew our Labour movement as no one else did. His great aim was to see the strength of the British Labour, Trade Union and Co-operative movement used in unity for the purpose its founders intended, to defend the working class and struggle against capitalism.

The key for him was to give the "first-born sons of modern industry", as Marx called our British workers, socialist consciousness, and then they would indeed be invincible.

It was for this that along with his comrades in arms, he helped to found the Communist Party. Its General Secretary from 1929 until illness forced him to relinquish the post in 1956, he transformed it from a sect to an organised Marxist Party, comprising the cream of the working class, the socialist inspiration of the British Labour movement. With the discipline of a trade unionist and the organising genius of the proud, skilled craftsman he was, he fashioned our Party into the fighting weapon it is today. He inspired our great programme, the *British Road to Socialism*, mapping the strategy of advance for social transformation. He passionately wanted Britain to occupy its rightful place in the van of the progressive forces of the world. He would have been the moving spirit in our Fortieth Anniversary Celebrations. Alas, this was not to be.

But he has built for the future a lasting structure which will yet accomplish here in Britain all he stood for. In particular, he nurtured and developed the younger generation of Communists for their responsibility, telling them, "You will live to see the day". No matter what we do, we will never repay him.

It is because of this, while we lower our banners in our sorrowful

and last salute, we are also commemorating a triumphant lifetime of service to the working class and Communism.

This is not the end. The new generation proudly takes up where he has left off, and how much easier our job is due to his self-sacrificing labours.

How often did he say in salute at the passing of other comrades—it were heartless to deny the sadness cast by death, and the tears that drop into the open grave are tears that sully no courage nor have to manhood ought of shame.

Yet since death must come to all to whom life has come, while it were cruelty not to sorrow, it were cowardice to break into despairing and useless repining.

Death has no terror for the enlightened. It may bring regrets at the thought of leaving those we held dearest on earth, but the consciousness of a well-spent life is all sufficient in the last sad hour of humanity.

While we give tears to the dead, let us from the grave turn back to life—life which has still its duties, if for a while it has lost its glory and its joy.

“Man’s dearest possession is life, and since it is given to him to live but once, he must so live as not to be seared with the shame of a cowardly and trivial past; so live as to have no torturing regrets for years without purpose; so live that dying he can say—all my life and all my strength were given to the finest cause in the world, the liberation of mankind.”

No man more fulfilled that ideal than Harry Pollitt.

And his cause is marching on, proud and triumphant all over the world.

Goodbye, Harry, our great friend and comrade, our inspiration and guide for so many years.

We give you this pledge—to live as you did, to fight as you did—to build the Party to which you devoted your life, so that war, poverty and injustice will be abolished and the great cause of socialism will prevail.

Wm. Gallacher, *President, Communist Party of Great Britain.*

Friends,

MY comrade, your comrade, the dearest and the best of all, after a life of selfless labour, lies quietly here in gentle sleep. The news of his death was a shock, a shock full of pain, to all who knew him. But while we mourn, we think of those who have even greater cause to mourn, and our hearts go out in deep compassion to Marjorie, to Jean and Brian. For them it is a tragic and sorrowful bereavement. But they will find a measure of comfort in the knowledge that he will live for evermore alongside the noblest in the life and history of the world’s working class.

He died just after the close of one of his most striking and inspiring campaigns. He has become a real part of the Australian working-class movement.

In over fifty years of the Socialist movement I have never known anyone like him. A keen student of Marxism and Leninism, he devoted himself to the carrying of their teaching to the workers and to the oppressed colonial peoples.

I have often heard the remark: "There is nothing too good for the workers"—and this was the guiding motive in all our comrade wrote, or spoke to them. Never anything haphazard or careless when preparing a document; or when speaking at a meeting. What care he took to present the clearest thought in the simple language that would carry home his message to all who heard him.

I have sat often and watched him, and envied him that quality of patient care that made him a leader far above the ordinary.

And he was a leader, not only of our Party, but of the great trade union and Labour movement here at home. Always a Socialist, courageous and incorruptible, while others sought to weaken our movement and wean it away from its true goal—and this has been going on since the formation of the Labour Party—he wrote and spoke with all his mighty eloquence to keep the goal of socialism before the organised workers, and to win them for the *British Road to Socialism*.

This was no easy task, for the bourgeoisie have a clever and cunning method of tempting and corrupting working-class leaders who show signs of weak character or who may be personally ambitious. Often it might seem that we were making little progress, but the ever-increasing attacks made against us by the press, the radio, the television, was a sure sign that the message of our Party and of its great and increasingly popular leader, was making an ever deeper impression on the movement. And this, in particular, since the publication of the *British Road to Socialism*.

Into this, assisted by other comrades at headquarters, Harry put a tremendous amount of work. Not once was it written but many times, and it stands out as a classic of Marxism for the working class of this country.

How have the workers responded to it? We have seen in recent weeks, conference after conference declaring for the *British Road* as it appears in Clause 4. From the earliest days, when others who should have spoken were silent, he was writing and speaking against American bases, against nuclear war, against N.A.T.O., and for a world at peace.

Now a mighty movement on these issues gains momentum every day. All this is a testimonial to the wise guidance he, and the Party he led, gave to the people of this country.

In the Soviet Union his name is known and honoured: all know the tremendous part he played in the campaign of 1920 that led to the dramatic incident of the *Jolly George* and the Councils of Action in defence of the young Workers' Republic; and of his unshakeable loyalty to the International all through the succeeding years.

In China, as in all other Socialist countries, his passing is deeply mourned; and he will also be mourned wherever workers are exploited or colonial peoples struggle to end imperialist domination.

Here at home, his comrades, while they mourn, will pledge themselves to carry forward the task to which he set his hand—a Socialist Britain, free and independent, and a good and peaceful neighbour to all other lands.

And with this pledge in my heart I take my last farewell.

Sir Richard Coppock.

IT is with sincere regret and my feeling to his family at the loss of a good comrade, Harry Pollitt. My experience of Harry goes from his boyhood days, when he and his mother were struggling, together with his uncle, to give him as good an education as possible, and his association with us in our socialist organisation in Openshaw.

I had the pleasure of speaking and lecturing to him on my little knowledge of Marx at that particular time. He had become secretary of the party and I was the literature secretary, and I think he was more concerned about the sale of the literature than he was of the contributions to the Party.

Alf Gerring, his uncle, took him in charge, and he went to Gorton Tank where he assisted myself and a man named Conrad Laurie in the great industrial difficulty of 1911 when the labourers came out on strike in the Openshaw district. I think his first speech to a great strike audience was with myself in 1911 at the Alhambra Theatre, Openshaw, on the eve of the great and first railway strike.

We discussed many things and we differed on many things, but he had the soul of a great friend and a great understanding.

His knowledge of the trade union movement as experienced through the years, and his close activity with that organisation, and in the main his basic faith that that organisation, the trade union movement, would bring about socialism at a greater pace than any other form of organisation.

I met him in 1918-19 in the meetings with Cook, Purcell, himself, Mann and other people, when we attempted to create a reconsideration of our association in our great international movements. Next I met him at many conferences in Paris and in Spain, and discussed many problems with him and many of his comrades, and knew the line of policy they were pursuing.

His international knowledge was based on profound understanding, and he was the greatest mixer of all times in the great international movement. His friendship and understanding of the socialist doctrine and the way that it should proceed was sound and incorruptible. He gave a great deal to the working-class society of this country. His battles with the comrades of 1930, some of the comrades I see here, created a situation that reversed the general point of view of many people in this country. Indeed, the politicians dare not go through with the same set of circumstances of 1913, with millions of idle men and women, for employment in our industry today is mainly a consequence of the thought and action that was put into those days.

We have lost a great comrade. The trade union movement has lost a great comrade. The socialist movement has an irreparable loss. I say to you Harry, good-bye. Your job was well done. There are no mistakes that you made, and we wish you rest, and that your song throughout the world shall be echoed from country to country.

D. McGarvey, *President, Boilermakers' Society.*

BROTHER HARRY POLLITT was one of the most respected members of our union, the Boilermakers' Society. He was the son of a blacksmith's striker, and from his very early days he realised the topsy-turvy world around him, and more particularly the false sense of values which had been nurtured over the centuries by the ruling bodies of the day, with the paramount object being the continued subjection of the working class to nothing more or less than a further lowered standard of living.

The odds against men like Harry Pollitt who have grown up and come in daily contact with all the subtle tricks of the employers and their lackeys, and who decide that the system of society must be changed, are, to say the least, tremendous. But it is to the everlasting credit of Harry Pollitt, being a boilermaker, that he always welcomed the fight when the odds looked overwhelmingly against him.

He represented our union at numerous T.U.C.s, and it is on record for all to see that Harry was no conference dummy. He made many good speeches on behalf of our members, and it was always his philosophy of life that if the members elected you to look after their interests, you were duty bound to speak up loud and clear whenever the occasion presented itself. And if you were not prepared to accept the responsibility of office, then you had no more right to keep the authority that goes with being in office.

In our union Harry has won respect as a prominent shop steward, and those of us who have been militant shop stewards can appreciate his personal difficulties when he was seeking employment. For as is usual, if the employers cannot take the edge off the militancy of a good shop steward by the threat of the sack, then they will find some pretext to sack the shop steward. Harry Pollitt's principles were such that he refused to barter them with the employers for the guarantee of employment and, in point of fact, he sacrificed himself on the altar of unemployment rather than become part of a system that he despised.

Harry played a most prominent part in the fight in London in the shop stewards' strike of 1919 for the shorter working week. And whilst the strike was not a success, it was instrumental in achieving a reduction of the working week soon after.

It is true that men of the calibre of Harry Pollitt were never out of the news, but more important still they never hid their principles for the things they believed in, and indeed they were prepared to face anything rather than betray their beliefs. It was on this score that Harry was imprisoned in 1925-26. This sentence kindled rather than extinguished the rebellious flame burning in Harry, and he came back to civilian life,

with his belief in the working class untarnished, and in 1929 was appointed General Secretary of the Communist Party.

Our union is a democratic and progressive union, and this appointment was accepted by the Boilermakers' Society as an honour to one of their worthy brothers who had reached the top in the political faith he had chosen; and it is to the credit of Brother Pollitt that during his period of office as General Secretary of the Communist Party, he conducted himself in an exemplary manner, in the best traditions of a boilermaker.

Brother Harry Pollitt was forty years a full benefit member of our union, and he went on superannuation on December 1958.

It is true the light of life has gone out of Harry; but your shining example will live throughout the span of time. We boilermakers say, "Good-bye Harry, well done, thou good and faithful servant".

Roger Garaudy, *Central Committee, Communist Party of France.*

COMRADES, I come here in the name of the French Communist Party to salute a man who understood and served the spirit of his age. A British patriot who, loving his country and his people, struggled for half a century to lead Britain along the road to socialism, and to continue the glorious tradition of the Chartist movement which gave to the world the example of the first independent organisation of the working class. A militant worker, loyal to the spirit of his class, who gave of his best to provide the British working class with a party of a new type, a Marxist, a Leninist Party.

A comrade in our common struggle for socialism and peace.

Fifty years ago Harry Pollitt began his struggle against reformism, and died, just when his Party was about to celebrate his seventieth birthday, with the pride of having remained utterly loyal for half a century to the ideals of his early manhood.

For us French Communists every stage in the political career of Harry Pollitt was closely linked with our own struggles.

When the great days of October 1917 lit up in Eastern Europe a flame of hope for the working people of the world, Harry Pollitt carried out a fierce struggle for "Hands off Russia". French sailors mutinied in the Black Sea and British dockers refused to load the *Jolly George* with arms for intervention.

In a common struggle against opportunism and class collaboration Harry Pollitt, the boilermaker, following the example of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, was working to forge the Party needed by the working class of Britain, at the very moment when in the struggle of class against class, Maurice Thorez and our Party were educating the French workers in the spirit of Leninism, and leading them into battle.

Together we British and French Communists fought against the fruits of capitalist crisis and the rising fascist threat.

When the British and French ruling classes were encouraging Hitler in his policy of aggression, Harry Pollitt was denouncing Chamberlain's Munich policy just as we were fighting the Munich policy of Daladier.

Harry Pollitt was showing the need for an alliance between Britain, the Soviet Union and France, and we in Paris were fighting the same struggle.

Yet again Harry Pollitt, organiser of the British Battalion of the International Brigades in Spain, fought in our common struggle against the non-intervention policy of Blum and the British Government.

British and French Communists share the same, heavy responsibility of fighting for socialism against ruling classes who have governed great colonial empires, against imperialisms which have used the exploitation of the colonial peoples as a weapon against the working people in their mother countries.

Harry Pollitt never withdrew from the serious task of struggling for the liberation of the colonial peoples, deeply understanding as he did the thought of Marx: "A people that oppresses another can never itself be free."

How close and near to ours were the last battles he fought, against the cold war, for the abolition of nuclear arms, against the transformation of Britain into a base for American war. As patriot and proletarian internationalist he united the struggle for national independence with the struggle for peace.

In 1940 Harry Pollitt wrote in his book *Serving My Time*: "There is no sacrifice too great to be allowed to serve the working class."

We French Communists lower our banners before our comrade-in-arms, and renew our pledge to follow his example, continuing the struggle for which he lived and died.

P. N. Pospelov, Central Committee, Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

DEAR COMRADES: Allow me on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to express the deepest condolences with the British Communist Party and working class at the grievous loss, the passing away of Comrade Harry Pollitt, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Comrade Harry Pollitt, whose fervent heart no longer beats, was an outstanding leader of the British and international Labour movement, a tireless fighter for peace, democracy and socialism, an ardent internationalist. His death is a great loss not only to the British, but to the whole international labour movement.

The Communist Party and the peoples of the Soviet Union, together with the British working people, deeply mourn the passing of their faithful friend and comrade-in-arms, unforgettable Harry Pollitt.

From his youth till the last hours of his life he was always in the

centre of the class struggle, consistently defending the interests of the working people, fighting against British and international imperialism.

An outstanding organiser and talented tribune of the working class, Comrade Harry Pollitt was one of the founders of the Communist Party of Great Britain, built upon the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

Harry Pollitt was always the most faithful and sincere friend of the Soviet Union and all the socialist countries. He greeted the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia as a great victory of the whole international labour movement. In the years of the foreign armed intervention against Soviet Russia which were critical for our country, Comrade Pollitt became one of the organisers of the famous "Hands off Russia Movement", of which the British working class can be proud as an outstanding example of the international class solidarity of the proletariat.

He occupied the responsible post of General Secretary of the Communist Party for twenty-seven years, taking great care of the organisational and ideological unity of the Party ranks, waging tireless struggle against reformism, revisionism and left-wing sectarian errors in the British Labour movement.

In 1920 Harry Pollitt had occasion to meet Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. Recalling this meeting he said: "The day when I met Comrade Lenin was the most significant day in my life."

Comrade Harry Pollitt deeply believed that the peace-loving forces are capable of frustrating the criminal plans for unleashing a new world war. He firmly defended the ideas of peaceful co-existence of the two systems, and the possibility of preventing wars in the present period, calling for vigilance of the peoples with regard to the danger of war.

Comrade Pollitt rejoiced at the victories won by the Soviet Union in the struggle for building Communist society, and warmly welcomed the successes of all the socialist countries. He regarded these successes as a source of inspiration to the working class of the whole world; and he was always confident in the ultimate victory of Marxist-Leninist teaching, which brings well-being and a peaceful future to all peoples.

Harry Pollitt wrote with enthusiasm about the results of the Twenty-First Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which he attended: "When I listened to N. S. Khrushchev's report and the speeches by the delegates I was once again impressed by the striving for peace, and the determination to raise the living standards of the Soviet people to the highest level in the world."

You have left us, Comrade Harry Pollitt, but working people throughout the world will cherish in their hearts the glorious memory of you as a tireless fighter for the unity and solidarity of the British and international Communist and Labour movement, in the interests of peace and socialism.

Farewell, our dear friend and comrade! The cause of communism for which you fought throughout your glorious life, will be victorious!

HARRY POLLITT

1890-1960

HARRY POLLITT was one of the most popular as well as one of the greatest leaders the British working class has ever produced. He was born on November 22nd, 1890, in the textile village of Droylsden in Lancashire. His mother was a weaver and his father a blacksmith's striker, both life-long trade unionists.

EARLY IDEAS

It was from them that he obtained much of his early ideas on Socialism. In his autobiography, *Serving My Time*, published in 1940, he described how "it was starting work as a half-timer (at the age of twelve) with Mother that really opened my eyes to the kind of world we live in.

"Every time she put her shawl round me before going to the mill on wet or very cold mornings I swore that when I grew up I would pay the bosses out for the hardships she suffered."

His mother introduced him to the Independent Labour Party at Openshaw, which he joined in 1909. Dick (now Sir Richard) Coppock belonged to the same branch and often recalls the enthusiasm and eloquence of the new member.

After serving his time as a boilermaker's apprentice at Gorton Tank railway locomotive building plant, he became a first-class member of the Boilermakers' Society in 1912, retaining this membership—of which he was proud—all his life.

He was elected London district secretary of the Boilermakers' Society in 1919.

YOUNG MILITANT

In 1912 he took part as a member of the Openshaw Socialist Society in the formation of the British Socialist Party, by amalgamation of the Social Democratic Party and various other small Socialist groups.

He was, however, always speaking and campaigning in favour of militant Socialism instead of the reformism which he saw was holding back the working-class cause.

Thus his first leaflet, produced for the Openshaw Socialist Society in 1911, entitled *Socialism or Social Reform*, argued:

"The word Socialism implies a complete revolution in the internal workings of the system which we call capitalism . . . social reform, however, proposes nothing of the kind, because a reform only acts on external effects brought about by internal causes. . . ."

AGAINST WAR

His revolutionary Socialist outlook made him an active and outspoken opponent of the First World War, which he regarded as a struggle between rival imperialist groups in which the workers on both sides would suffer and gain nothing.

He devoted his great energies to strengthening working-class organisation and securing improvements in pay and conditions.

As a result he was victimised and found it impossible to obtain work in big factories or shipyards.

While he was working at a small workshop in Swinton, Lancashire, the news of the Russian Revolution on November 7th, 1917, arrived.

“THEY’VE DONE IT!”

He immediately grasped the epoch-making nature of this event and has written that his uppermost thought was: “The workers have done it at last.”

“It wouldn’t have mattered,” he wrote, in *Looking Ahead*, “where this revolution had taken place, Timbuctoo or Costa Rica.

“The thing that mattered was that lads like me had whacked the bosses and the landlords, had taken their factories, their lands and their banks. . . .

“That was enough for me. These were the lads and lasses I must support through thick and thin.”

When the young and weak Socialist Republic was attacked by the armies of foreign capitalist and imperialist Powers—including the British—Harry Pollitt threw himself into a tremendous campaign to bring this intervention to an end.

This was the famous “Hands off Russia” movement which, at its London conference in 1919, in the presence of delegates from all parts of the country, decided to work for a general strike should the Government persist in its armed intervention against Socialism in Russia.

THE “JOLLY GEORGE”

The campaign mounted to a high pitch of intensity, and when it was discovered in May 1920 that the Government intended to ship arms on board the *Jolly George* for Poland to use against Russia, the London dockers refused to load the vessel.

This was the culminating point which compelled the Government to retreat and stop its attacks.

These experiences made him more and more conscious of the need for an independent working-class political party that would give united Socialist leadership, instead of the divided mixture of contradictory leads loaded with reformism that was prevalent.

Accordingly he took part in 1920 in the foundation of the British Communist Party, of which he was elected general secretary in August 1929.

He held the position for twenty-seven years. In 1956 illness compelled him to retire from the position, accepting the post of chairman instead.

His illness later became more serious and he sustained a stroke in March 1958 at the age of sixty-seven.

His recovery was satisfactory enough to enable him to continue to do a great deal of political campaigning and he was given medical clearance for his visit to Australia.

INTEGRAL PART

His greatest contribution to the British working class was his success in applying his understanding of the way in which the Communist Party should function as an integral part of the Labour movement.

Under his leadership, the Communist Party learned how to give Socialist leadership while avoiding the danger of the narrow sectarianism which made the earlier Socialist groups so impotent.

In March 1925 he was kidnapped by a fascist gang to prevent him speaking at a meeting in Liverpool, and in 1925, four days after his marriage, he was arrested with eleven other leading members of the Communist Party.

The charge was one of publishing seditious libel and inciting to commit breaches of the Incitement to Mutiny Act of 1797.

In fact, the aim was to put this leading group of working-class Socialists out of the way because of the growing industrial storm which the ruling class realised was developing toward a general strike.

Pollitt and others were sentenced to twelve months—enough to keep them locked up during the period of the General Strike which took place in 1926.

AID FOR SPAIN

He played a leading part in making it possible to launch the *Daily Worker*, which he regarded as essential in the struggle for peace and socialism because it would serve the interests of the working class.

He never failed to campaign for the paper's Fighting Fund, describing those who gave to it as the "veritable salt of the earth, for without them there would be no daily newspaper of the working class".

During the 1930's he led great campaigns against unemployment and fascism.

He played an outstanding part in the organisation of the British section of the International Brigade and other forms of aid for the Republican Government of Spain, which was under attack from Hitler and Mussolini as well as the Franco fascists.

He was arrested in 1934 for speeches against the treatment of the unemployed, but later released.

He was tireless in warning the country of the consequences of Chamberlain's policy of appeasement, showing that this would only strengthen fascism and the danger of war.

He helped to develop the movement for peace and collective security against fascism, which brought together people from different organisations and walks of life, and gave evidence urging disarmament at the Arms Commission in 1935.

KEY TO PEACE

The key to peace, he held, was an alliance between Britain, the Soviet Union and France to check fascism.

He has always maintained that the cornerstone of any peace policy for Britain was, and remains, an alliance with the Soviet Union.

During the Second World War he campaigned to secure the greatest effort for victory over the fascist powers, urging the opening of the Second Front and measures that would produce a just and lasting peace.

Since the war he has been tireless in striving to develop greater united action by all sections of the Labour movement to abolish nuclear weapons and to end American domination of this country.

Over and over again in speeches all over the country, he has returned to the idea—which he urged on a Manchester audience in February this year—that “If Britain and the Soviet Union were to sign a peace treaty no nation would dare to go to war.

“Britain should work with the Russians for peace, instead of with the Americans for war.”

SUPERB EXAMPLE

Throughout his life he had always understood the need for the British working-class movement to fight to help the colonial people win their independence.

He himself set a superb example, never neglecting an opportunity to help in this struggle.

He visited the Soviet Union first in 1921 and on each of his many later visits took great pleasure in observing the great progress being made.

He had also been to each of the Socialist countries in Europe and to China and always made a big point of explaining what he had seen to British audiences on his return.

Harry Pollitt was a human, lovable man, with a great sense of humour and a seemingly endless store of stories having not only some important political point but also their highly amusing side.

THEY MUST WIN

He made a massive contribution to Marxist thought and understanding in this and other countries by his insistence on the need for the Communist Party here to produce a long-term programme which would answer the question of what the Communists in Britain would do to get real powers for the people and solve once and for all the problems of lasting prosperity and peace. He explained the questions that such a programme must answer. He inspired the production of the *British Road to Socialism* which set out in terms of British traditions, experience and

institutions the path of advance to a new society to be achieved by the working-class in alliance with all progressive forces. He was tireless in his work and propaganda for this programme, explaining its proposals, emphasising its importance, and declaring his confidence in the capacity and power of the working class to break the stranglehold of British monopoly capitalism.

His supreme confidence in the British working class and its ability to achieve socialism in Britain was summed up in these words in *Serving My Time*:

"There is no other class but the working class for me. They give one strength, hope and inspiration.

"Their history is the only history worth knowing and fighting to develop in the conditions of our time.

"There is no sacrifice too great to be allowed to serve the working class. . . . I know that one day they will conquer power in Britain.

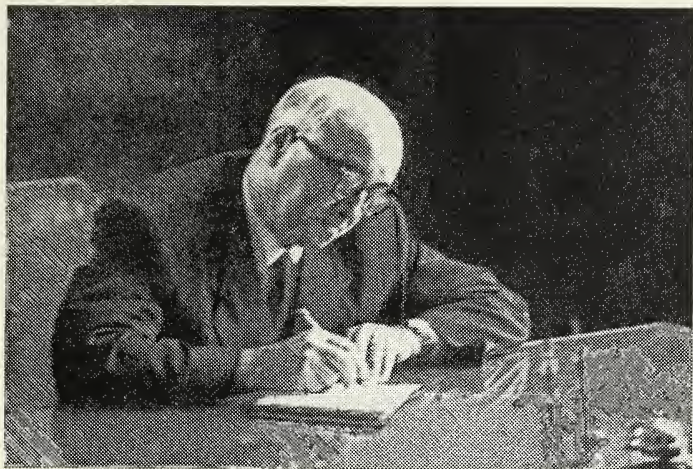
BURNING FIRE

"The Communist Party will lead this struggle to its successful issue. Then, with the power in the hands of the workers, they will solve the problems of our social system that the rich can never solve.

"This is the dream and the aim which all the pioneers of our Labour movement have struggled to make real.

"This is the 'gleam' which they have tirelessly followed, which has inspired them to go to the street corners and market places to speak to a mere handful, has given them eloquence and burning fire to talk to their mates in the workshops and homes, and the certainty which has enabled them to endure crushing poverty and victimisation and made persecution easier to bear, which has steeled them to break down barrier after barrier and build up working class organisation and power."

(*Daily Worker*, June 28th, 1960.)



Whilst on a visit to China.



Speaking to British members of the International Brigade in Spain.



Addressing a mass meeting in London.



Talking to a foundation member of the Communist Party.

TRIBUTES TO HARRY POLLITT

TRIBUTES to Harry Pollitt, messages of sympathy to his family and his Party, came in letters and telegrams from all over the world. They came from brother Communist Parties, from trade union committees and branches and Communist Party branches in Britain, from personal friends, both Communist and non-Communist, and many others.

There is space here for only a selection from the tributes from abroad, and extracts from some of the letters.

FROM BRITAIN

An Irish Catholic family, who live in the same road:

It was with a deep sense of personal loss that we heard of Mr. Pollitt's death, and words seem inadequate to express our sympathy. He was like a second father to "us Paynes" and will always be remembered by the girls as such. Never was a man more worthy of the love and esteem in which he was held by so many, and somehow, birthdays without a card from "Uncle Harry" and our ritual visit on Christmas Day will mean that these occasions will never seem quite the same again.

Barnett Letsky, one of Harry's oldest friends:

Harry shared a bed with me in Newcastle over forty years ago. He could always have shared anything Win and I have had ever since that time, but it was part of his kindness, consideration and independence that all the years we have known him I cannot remember a single instance when he has ever asked for something for himself, though he was the essence of thoughtfulness and generosity for others. He was such an admirable human being, full of kindness as well as courage, and absolutely incorruptible. Even the manner of his passing was characteristic of his consideration for other people—it all happened in one day, 10,000 miles away when he has just completed one of the most valuable trips he ever made.

Stanley Crossley:

Ever since we were kids in the early days of the old Openshaw Socialist Society, prior to the formation of the C.P. in 1920, the Pollitts and the Crossleys were bound together like one big family, not only in common purpose but in brotherly love and affection. His great humanism has endeared him in a million hearts, and it will be a long time before the breach caused by his all-too-sudden death can be filled.

Reginald Bridgeman:

I write to express to you my most sincere sympathy in your bereavement. The news of Harry's death was a great shock. The news and articles recently published in the *Daily Worker* of his Australian tour were full of his characteristic gaiety and ardour.

I had known him well over thirty years, always a kind and helpful friend. I am one of the thousands, of the millions, who owe so much of my own thoughts to Harry, because his summary of the problem, or the crisis or the emergency made it clear, and explained how it was to be faced, understood and dealt with. His enthusiasm, courage and determination never seemed to waver. He never suffered from a bad day in fighting the battles of the working people.

I wanted you to know how much Harry and his example have meant to me.

Lily Cole:

I wish to join in the many tributes now being paid to your late husband, and in a personal capacity to offer you and your family my most heartfelt condolences on your very, very sad loss.

I can always remember my dear late father saying, "Ah, Harry Pollitt, he has the voice of a bell", and although ailing for many years himself he would go to hear Harry speak along with Tom Mann, here in Manchester in the early thirties until too incapacitated to do so. It wasn't surprising that I graduated into politics in the late 1930's and will never forget attending my first big political rally at the Free Trade Hall in 1938, and listening to Harry for the first time. How I was enthused and inspired, and have never failed to be so ever since. There were times subsequently when I felt impatient, depressed, particularly during the war, but to attend a meeting addressed by Harry was the most wonderful and gratifying tonic, and one would be re-born so to speak, and feel ten feet tall, so that the mundane tasks once more took on greater significance. His eloquence was such that his Lancashire accent sounded the most beautiful dialect in the world. Yes, there is so much that Harry has left behind him, that we who have been fortunate enough to cross his path have a great debt to be thankful for.

I feel a personal loss with Harry's passing, as will every Party comrade, but the only way to perpetuate his memory is to help bring into reality in Great Britain, the country which he so dearly loved and encouraged us all to love too, the ultimate goal and glory, which is socialism.

***The Executive Committee,
South Wales Area of the National Union of Mineworkers:***

It is with very deep sorrow that we heard of the death of your Harry Pollitt, Chairman of the Communist Party.

I am asked to convey to you the sympathy and condolences of the Executive Committee and the miners of South Wales.

The miners loved Harry Pollitt and they shall never forget his courage and fighting spirit. He was a great champion of the cause of the miners and the British working class generally.

His name and work will live for ever.

Please convey to the members of your Committee our very deep sympathy in their sad loss.

D. D. EVANS, *General Secretary.*

The Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians:

Our Executive Committee was most grieved to hear of Harry's sudden death and have asked me to convey to you our deepest sympathy.

Although it is argued from time to time that no one is irreplaceable I think it will be a long time before the movement produces another person who renders such devoted and sterling service to it.

Our Union Executive like many others contains many people who did not share Harry's political views, but we were unanimous, as I am sure most other working-class organisations will be, in recording our tribute to his life-long service to the Labour movement.

GEORGE ELVIN, *General Secretary*.

The Workers' Circle, Division 9:

I wish to extend to you and the Communist Party the heartfelt regrets of the members of Branch 9 Workers' Circle, at the loss you have suffered through the death of Comrade Harry Pollitt.

We have always taken pride in the fight Comrade Pollitt conducted on behalf of the oppressed, among whom Jews were counted.

Workers' Circle members will remember him for the friendly references he always made in regard to their progressive attitude towards political issues of our time.

We assure you that our appreciation of your Party which inspired Comrade Pollitt in his activities, will be no less now that Comrade Pollitt has passed away.

M. SCHNEIDERMAN, *Chairman*.

R. GARFIELD, *Secretary*.

The Welsh Committee of the Communist Party:

On behalf of the Welsh Committee and every comrade in our Party in Wales I am sending you the deepest sympathy and comradely pride that words can express. We have all lost our greatest friend, as well as the leader who was so much the central rock of the Party, that we still can't imagine it without him.

Perhaps the greatest tribute to Harry is the strength of the Party, so deeply rooted now, and able to carry on with the unshakable confidence that he had. But it will always be his Party, and comrades still to join us will get the finest and truest Communist inspiration from Harry's life.

Here in Wales the shock and sorrow are felt more widely than anywhere. In the Rhondda and in South Wales generally Harry has a place in the heart of the working-class movement that no other non-Welshman has. Harry himself and all he stood for will have a profound influence in the minds of thousands of miners this week.

Our feeling of loss is overwhelming. We are all thinking of you in your much greater loss, and hoping that sharing your sorrow with so many thousands is some help.

Our memory of Harry will help us to build the great Party in Wales for which he did so much.

Just today our hearts are filled with sorrow, love and comradeship for the man who made most of us what we are.

BERT PEARCE, *Secretary*.

Executive Committee of the Young Communist League:

Please convey to the Executive Committee and all members of the Communist Party our deepest sympathy in the death of Harry Pollitt.

His loss will come as a great blow to all members of the Young Communist League. Harry was an honorary member of the Y.C.L. and we always regarded him as a staunch friend. We looked up to Harry as a shining example of how a Communist should fight and live his life.

He always showed a great warmth for and understanding of young people and their problems. He was truly a friend of youth.

Harry was at all times a source of inspiration to all young Communists, because of the warmth and sincerity of his personality, and because of his unbreakable confidence in the eventual triumph of the British working class.

His life and struggle serve as an example to us all. In his lifetime the gleam of socialism, of which he so often spoke, has grown to a glorious reality for hundreds of millions throughout the world.

On the occasion of his death, we young Communists pledge to work with renewed strength to achieve a Socialist Britain, to try to fill the great gap left by his death.

We will be helped in this by the memory of a fine comrade and friend, Harry Pollitt, whose life was devoted to the finest cause in the world—the liberation of mankind.

GERRY POCOCK, *National Organiser.*

The E.M.I. (Wembley) Factory Branch:

We, the members of the E.M.I. (Wembley) Factory Branch of the Communist Party wish to express our deepest sympathy and condolences to the Party, with the passing of our great friend and comrade Harry Pollitt.

We pledge ourselves to carry on the struggle to obtain those ideals for which he has fought and worked all his life, with even greater effort, as a tribute and salute to a great man and comrade; and when the dawn and light of socialism shines on our Britain, we shall remember the great part Harry played in bringing it into being.

ROLAND DRAY, *Branch Secretary.*

Drayton Ward Communist Party Branch, Ealing:

We write to you to express our deep sympathy in the loss of the good comrade who has been for so long an inspiration to us all, and who will be so sorely missed.

Harry represented the best in the past, present and future of the British working class. For him socialism was not only scientific but heart-felt. He understood from his own experience the struggles of the bad old days, could keep his head in our own confusing times, and still look forward and "paint the vision splendid".

He did not only sing the brave old songs, but he sang the brave new songs, and it can truly be said of his successful Australian tour that he died singing.

We do not think we shall see his like again.

SYLVIA BACON.

FROM ABROAD

The Australian Communist Party:

It is with deepest sorrow and regret that we have to convey to you the sad news that Comrade Harry Pollitt while on board ship returning home suffered a stroke and died. We extend to the Party to the British working class and to Comrade Pollitt's family our greatest sympathy. SHARKEY.

Central Committee, Communist Party of the Soviet Union:

All his life he was a dauntless fighter for the bright future of the British people, for the national interest of his country and for peace between all peoples. As one of the founders and fighting leaders of the British Communist Party, Harry Pollitt devoted all his energies to the building and strengthening of the ranks of the Party on the basis of the principles of Marxism-Leninism, and in the spirit of working class internationalism.

The Soviet people will ever preserve the happiest memories of Comrade Pollitt as a true and great friend of our country, and a tireless fighter for the strengthening of friendship between the British and Soviet peoples.

Central Committee of the Communist Party of China:

Shocked to learn of unfortunate passing away of Comrade Harry Pollitt, Chairman of Executive Committee, Communist Party of Great Britain. Central Committee Communist Party of China, on behalf of all Party members and all Chinese people, expresses deep condolence to Executive Committee British Communist Party and family of Comrade Pollitt.

Comrade Pollitt was the respected leader of British working class, and an outstanding fighter of international, proletarian revolutionary movement. Comrade Pollitt devoted all his life and energy to the revolutionary cause. His passing away is loss not only to British Communist Party and British working class, but also to international proletarian revolutionary struggle. Comrade Pollitt consistently sympathised with and supported the revolutionary cause of the Chinese people. Chinese people will also remember him with affection.

Central Committee of the Communist Party of Austria:

It was a great shock to us to learn of the death of Comrade Harry Pollitt, Chairman of your Party. We know what Comrade Pollitt meant for you. We would like to express how much he meant for us. Comrade Pollitt was one of the outstanding fighters for peace and socialism. His loyalty to the cause of the working class, his unassuming character, firmness of principle, his kind-heartedness and feeling for people, his close knowledge of the life and thoughts of the workers, his brilliant, compelling oratory made him a model also for us. Some years ago Comrade Pollitt wrote that the British and Austrian Communists had similar conditions for their fight. They had to fight against a strong revisionist Labour Party. We were able to learn a great deal from Comrade Pollitt as to how this fight must be fought. We followed with admiration his fight against fascism and war, for the defence of the Soviet Union, for the spreading of the ideas of socialism. He was also a model of internationalism which plays so great a part in the struggle of the British working class movement.

It is symbolic that Comrade Pollitt met his death on the way back from a distant country, where he had spoken for the cause of peace and socialism.

Harry Pollitt did not see the fulfilment of his dreams of a Socialist Britain, but he saw socialism grow to be the greatest force in the world. He knew that not imperialism but socialism was the decisive feature of our century. The gap left by Harry Pollitt's death can only be filled by our serving with more intense energy and enthusiasm the cause which he had so much at heart. We want you to know, dear comrades, that we Austrian Communists stand firmly at your side.

Central Committee, French Communist Party:

We share the sorrow which you are experiencing as a result of the death of Comrade Harry Pollitt, leader of the Communist Party of Great Britain of which he was one of the founders, and a leading figure of the international working class movement. Together with the British working class the French working class will feel profoundly the loss which is represented by his death, and we beg of you to convey our condolences to your Party.

Secretariat, Communist Party of Italy:

We have received the news of the death of Comrade Harry Pollitt and send profound condolences on the loss of this unrelenting fighter for the welfare of the British workers against colonialism, against fascism in Spain, and for world peace. He will always remain alive as a shining example of a fighter for socialism. The Italian workers in their sympathy lower their banner before a great leader in the international working class movement.

Executive Committee, The Communist Party, Belfast, N. Ireland:

The Irish Communist Party and fighters for peace and socialism in this country share your Party's great grief at the death of its beloved leader, Harry Pollitt.

The working class of our two countries, and the entire international working class movement, have lost a leader whose unrivalled services and devotion to the working class of these islands, joined to rare gifts of leadership, are an inspiration to the British and Irish peoples in the struggles which lie ahead.

We join with you and the British working class in honouring the memory of Harry Pollitt, by re-dedicating ourselves to redoubled effort for the triumph of the cause to which Harry Pollitt so steadfastly devoted his active life—the causes of peace, the liberation of our countries from the yoke of imperialism and capitalism, and for the victory of socialism.

Irish Workers' League:

Deeply regret learn death Harry Pollitt. His was a life devoted service to British workers and great cause socialism. Champion people everywhere battling for freedom.

Secretariat, Communist Party of India, Delhi:

Heartfelt sorrow loss outstanding leader world Communist movement. Great friend India. Convey deep sympathy Mrs. Pollitt family.

A.K.E.L., Central Committee, Cyprus:

A.K.E.L. Central Committee and membership, as well as Cypriot working people, deeply grieved by news Comrade Pollitt's sudden death. With Pollitt's death Cypriot people lose a sincere friend and consistent fighter for their freedom, as all other colonial peoples do. Pollitt's long record of service to cause of working people's interest and socialism will serve as example, not only for British people, but also international progressive movement. A.K.E.L. sends its deep condolences to British C.C. and British Labour movement.

***Dolores Ibarruri, President of the Central Committee,
Communist Party of Spain:***

Dear Comrades, allow me to express my deep sentiment and join my sorrow to yours at the death of our fine comrade, Harry Pollitt. He will live for ever with us as a great friend of the working class and the Spanish people, an ardent and sincere militant for peace, democracy and socialism. In these hours of sadness and loss we salute the memory of our comrade and friend.

W. Z. Foster, Communist Party U.S.A.:

World peace forces are saddened at passing of Harry Pollitt, noble British Communist. He led brave life of struggle. His life is inspiration to youth and all Labour's fighters of many countries.

Luiz Carlos Prestes:

In the name of the Brazilian Communists we express our deepest sentiments on the death of Harry Pollitt.

D. N. Pritt:

I try not to think of Harry's death. I think rather of his life, with its splendid examples of courage and vision, which gave such great help to so many, including myself.

EXTRACTS FROM THE SPEECHES OF HARRY POLLITT

To Be A Communist

One characterisation of John Donne's caught my eye. The line will be forever fixed on my memory, and audiences of mine will learn this to their cost—it was this: "All his days he was on fire."

That is the spirit I want to inculcate into every member of the Communist Party, so that they, too, may be on fire in work and propaganda for our common cause.

When I speak about pride in the Party I do not mean boasting about our Party membership, or letting it be known in all places and at all times that we are members of the Communist Party, but by expressing our pride in the high quality of our work.

This is no new thought on my part. The old organisation of the most skilled craftsmen in the land knew what it was doing when its initiation ceremony exhorted new members "so to conduct themselves in the workshop that the employer would be prompted to ask where others like them could be obtained".

* * *

We have to reach and set the highest standards, so that our work reflects the nobility of Communism and tries to express, even though the limitations may be strict and severe, something of the inspiration it gives to those who embrace it.

From one of his speeches in 1946.

Why We Want Socialism

Why do we want socialism? We want socialism not only to abolish capitalist profit and the exploitation of man by man—although rest assured it will do that.

We want it to show what our incomparable working class, our scientists and intellectuals could do with our country and its resources when once freed from the fetters of capitalism.

We want it to tear down the slums and rebuild the city beautiful. We want it to re-equip our industries and give our engineers and draughtsmen—and

there are none better in the world—the opportunity to pour out the goods for a happy, peaceful, creative life.

We want it to develop to the full all our sources of energy—coal, water, the tides, atomic energy—so that labour can be lightened, production increased and culture flourish.

We want socialism so that our old people, in the twilight of their lives, can be honoured for what they have given to society, instead of being left to rot as at present.

We want it so that the women members of the community can play their full part in the creation of a new Socialist Britain on the basis of their complete economic, political and social emancipation.

We want it to give our youth its head to build and create for peace instead of being trained to destroy in war.

We want it to bring every idle acre into smiling cultivation, so that Britain can blossom and flower in a way never yet seen.

And above all, we want it so that our great British working class, so proudly described by Marx as the “first-born sons of modern industry”, which so often has led the working class of the world, takes its place once again in the van of the forces advancing to socialism.

Can we do it?

Yes, we can, if only we use the power of our Labour movement as its founders intended it should be used.

*“Challenge to Labour”—Political Report
to Twenty-Third Party Congress, 1954.*

For Peace and Working Class Unity

The most urgent duty before the Communist Party is to work for the unity of the working class and all democratic and peace-loving people, who are concerned about the present and future developments, and who are anxious to find ways and means through which their immediate problems can be solved in their interests.

This cannot be done by the Communist Party alone: if it could, such a situation as we have today would not exist.

Unity in action, once it can be organised on a sufficient scale, can develop so great a movement that far-reaching changes are possible, which guarantee the preservation of peace, democracy and social progress.

The unity of all the Labour, democratic and peace-loving sections of the British people must therefore be the keynote of everything the Communist Party now works and fights for, in every phase of the present political struggle.

The urgent need for united action to defend peace, our national independence, wages and full employment, and for a Parliament and Government that can solve Britain's problems in the interests of its working people, should be burned into the consciousness of the organised workers in particular, especially in the factories and mass organisations.

Not a formal unity, or unity for unity's sake, but a fighting unity that can be expressed in the militant actions of the working people against the Tories and right-wing Labour leaders.

A unity firmly rooted in the factories and mass organisations of the working class, which, the more united and powerful it comes, will attract to its support large sections of professional and young people at present influenced by the propaganda of the Tories.

Unless we can build this kind of unity in action, then in this atomic age the whole working class faces the prospect of severe defeats and setbacks that will make the experiences of the past look like Pleasant Sunday Afternoons; and in its future struggles it will have to face greater odds, repressions and difficulties than at present it believes are possible.

But the first essential thing to be understood is that unless we can get this conviction, then we shall never overcome the obstacles to such a unity which exist, or bring decisive sections of all workers by hand and brain into united action for the things they consider are matters of life and death to them and their families.

To succeed, however, in this urgent and necessary activity, means we have to end every vestige of sectarianism and opportunism in our ranks. It means we have to see our work in the factories, trade unions, Co-operative movement, and all local mass organisations in an entirely different light. At the same time it should bring home to us the necessity of more support and attention to our work among the young people and the women.

It means to create that mutual feeling of trust and confidence among the workers in the Labour and democratic movement that we Communists are as ready and eager to work in unity with them for the things *they* want, as we sometimes seem to create the impression we are for the things *we* think the workers want.

* * *

Above all, the defence of peace now lies at the very centre of the world situation, and of millions of working people's thoughts.

This is a challenge to our Party. We live and work in Britain, without whose support no war anywhere could take place . . . how dangerous such a situation is when we do not know what the madmen in the States will get up to next, banking again on the support of Britain.

* * *

Every ounce of influence and capacity to work which our Party undoubtedly possesses should now be thrown into the fight to win millions of British citizens, without any questioning about what their political, economic or religious associations may be, to defend peace.

*The Fight for Peace and Working Class
Unity. Report to the Executive Committee
—July 8th, 1950.*

We Look Forward

We look forward to a future as different as day is from night. We see the mills of Lancashire turning out, not uniforms for British lads to fight and die in far-off lands, but the clothing and fabrics needed by the freed colonial peoples. We see the great engineering factories of Britain, ceasing to produce guns, tanks and planes for the slaughter of the Malaysians, or the African peoples, but instead sending locomotives, machine tools, electrical generators and motor-cars.

We envisage the ships of Britain's merchant navy sailing the seas not loaded with troops, shells and poisonous chemicals, but carrying our goods to the other countries and bringing theirs to us. Instead of piling up the sterling balances out of the sweat and blood of the Malayan plantation workers or the African miners and small farmers, we would conduct trade on the basis of equal exchange and be prepared to give every assistance in our power to help formerly backward countries to take their place amongst the foremost nations of the world.

*Speech at the Second Conference of
Communist and Workers' Parties within
the Sphere of British Imperialism—April
1954.*

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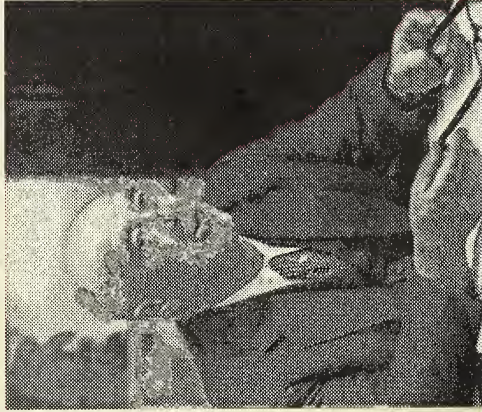
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World communism in the 20th
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HARRY POLLITT

MEMBERSHIP APPEAL



"We are Communists because we want to see the means of production, distribution and exchange firmly in the hands and control of the working people. We stand for the poor against the rich. We stand for the socialist, classless system of society. We stand for the abolition of every means of nuclear and bacteriological warfare. We stand for the freedom of all peoples struggling for national liberation and independence. In short we stand for the greatest and noblest set of principles mankind has ever known." —Harry Pollitt

**JOIN THE COMMUNIST PARTY—AND HELP
TO ACHIEVE THIS GLORIOUS FUTURE**

I wish to become a member of the Communist Party
(Please write in block letters)

Name

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